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ABSTRACT

Four American professors formed a team to provide instruction in English as a second language (ESL) to university professors in the People's Republic of China. Participants received 180 hours of instruction in ESL methodology and English language skills based on individual approaches that covered the Silent Way, Community Language Learning, and more eclectic methods. In addition, participants received instruction in linguistics and American culture. At the end of the program, the participants were polled. Results indicated satisfaction with most of the program. The importance of cultural factors was reflected in the participants' continued insistence that formal lectures--the traditional Chinese approach--are the most highly valued classroom activities. Nevertheless, participants were impressed with the non-traditional approaches, particularly Community Language Learning. Because methodology is virtually absent from Chinese curriculum, participants expressed special appreciation for the methodological approach, and seemed open to even more such instruction. (JB)

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Training Teachers Across Cultures: Report on a Fulbright Program in China

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In Spring 1980, the first Fulbright TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) teacher training program in the Peoples Republic of China began classes at Peking University. Continuing into July, the intensive twenty-week program was designed to provide experienced university-level Chinese teachers of English with insights into TEFL methodology and linguistics as they are curren tly viewed in the United States. In addition, the participants were provided with English language skills development and information on aspects of American culture. The program was supported by the U.S. International Communication Agency, which sent a team of four TEFL specialists to implement it.* Participants in program were recruited on the basis of results on English proficiency examinations. The fifty teachers finally chosen to attend represented twenty-six colleges and universities throughout China.

The four members of our team represented a variety of views regarding approaches to second language teaching. One team member was an advocate of the Silent Way, Caleb Gategno's learner-centered approach to language teaching and learning (Gategno, 1976). Another was a proponent of Charles Curran's humanistically oriented Community Language Learning (Curran, 1974). The other team members are probably best described as "eclectic" in their approach to second language teaching and learning, drawing on such resources as Rivers

*The other team members: Rosamund Blanck, New York City; Irene Dutra, Bronx Community College of CUNY; and Nancy Works, University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. All team members provided suggestions helpful in developing the questionnaire used in this study. Any errors in interpretation of the results are my own.

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and Temperly (1978) and Brown (1980). Each of these four team members offered roughly 45 hours (five weeks, nine hours per week) of methodology and English language skills development to each of four small groups of participants. Each participant group thus received 45 hours of instruction compatible with the Silent Way, 45 hours compatible with Community Language Learning, and 90 hours with an"eclectic" approach to foreign language teaching. Chart 1 summarizes the instructional framework in methods and English Language skills development. In general, methodology was taught through demonstration, as language skills were being taught to participants. Given this variety of approaches, we felt we provided our Chinese participants with a fair picture of the "state of the art" in TESOL in the United States.

CHART 1

SMALL GROUP LANGUAGE SKILLS AND METHODOLOGY INSTRUCTION VIA SILENT WAY (SW), COMMUNITY LANGUAGE LEARNING (CLL), ECLECTIC 1 AND ECLECTIC 2

Weeks \ Instruction	SW	CLL	Eclectic 1	Eclectic 2
1 - 5	3	4	1	2
6 - 10	1	2	3	4
11 - 15	4	3	2	1
16 - 20	2	1	4	3

Each block represents approximately 45 hours of instruction for the small groups designated by numbers 1 - 4. Small groups varied in size from 10 participants (Group 1) to 15 participants (Group 4).

In addition to this total of 180 hours devoted to methods and English language skills development, participants received forty hours of instruction in linguistics and approximately the same amount of time was devoted to

"American culture", which consisted largely of lectures on a variety of topics related to contemporary issues in American society.

It may be some time before a true assessment of the impact of our efforts on participants' effectiveness as teachers can be made. Ideally such an assessment would include some measurement of progress in English language skills made by EFL students taught by our participants before and after our program. It is not likely that this type of assessment will be made any time soon.

However, we did attempt a more direct measure of program effect on the Chinese teacher-participants in the program by means of a questionnaire. Despite the shortcomings inherent in program assessment by means of questionnaires, (Webb, et. al 1966; 1,19) we believed that such a procedure might yield some useful information about our program. We eliminated one source of disadvantage in using the questionnaire by maintaining anonymity and specifically requesting no names be included on it. The questionnaire (see Appendix) was administered to forty-five of the forty-nine participants who completed the program. There was no time limit for completion of the questionnaire. In addition to twelve specific questions on various aspects of the program, participants were requested in an open-ended question to describe "in what ways this twenty-week program has effected you as a teacher (including) the single most important thing you got out of the program." The questionnaire was completed by forty-five participants.

Overall, the results of the questionnaire seem to indicate participant satisfaction with most aspects of the program. For example, we might have expected some dissatisfaction with the group placement criterion of language proficiency based on TOEFL scores and a composition. We might have expected

this dissatisfaction particularly on the part of those who placed in the lower proficiency groups. We found, however, that in response to question #4 only six participants felt the language proficiency criterion for placement was "unfair". In response to a related question (#5), thirty participants indicated that they felt "positive" about "being in my group for the morning (TEFL methods and skill development) classes". In another related question, only 1 of the 45 participants indicated (s)he was "displeased" as a result of being placed in a particular group (Question #2).

Thirty-eight (84%) of the participants indicated they felt positively about the "broad scope" of the program which, as noted above, included instruction compatible with Community Language Learning, Silent Way, and "eclectic" approaches to language teaching. While participants did express strong support for the broad scope of the program, they were discriminating in their preferences for the various topics and approaches included within the program. The teachers were asked to indicate their preferences for five program categories by responding to question #12: "I would have preferred having more (check one or more lines)". Results are summarized in Chart 2.

[Chart 2 about here]

Even after twenty weeks, a majority of the participants were interested in learning more about "language teaching techniques". This is perhaps not surprising when one considers that formal instruction in language teaching methodology is virtually non-existent in China (Cowan, et.al., 1979). In addition, it is apparent that at least one clearly non-traditional second language teaching approach in the program captured the interest of close to

half of the participants. Almost half of those completing the questionnaire indicated a desire to learn more about Community Language Learning. The interest in this approach is also reflected in participants' comments on the open-ended portion of the questionnaire. Participants were requested to write about "in what ways this twenty-week program has affected you as a teacher. Include and identify the single most important thing you got out of the program." Community Language Learning was most often cited as that "single most important thing" that participants got out of the program.

It has been noted (Cowen, et.al., 1979; Shirk, 1979) that traditional Chinese modes of instruction include teacher-as-dominant and student-as-passive roles in the classroom, with large group lectures a valued norm. The latter is, of course, a prevalent mode of instruction in many other countries, as well as in many educational settings in the U.S. (Furey, 1980; Kelly, 1969; Grove, 1980). Participants' views regarding the value of this and other second language classroom activities to which they were exposed by the Fulbright team were explored in item 10 of our questionnaire. Ten activities utilized in the program were listed, and participants were requested to assign a value to each activity on a scale of 5 (very important) to 1 (unimportant). It is clear from responses to this question that we had not changed in the minds of most participants the traditional view of the value of "listening to lectures." Thus, despite years of Chairman Mao's exhortations against "interminable lectures and recitations" (Shirk, 1979: 187) and despite months of our own demonstrations of alternatives to the lecture as a classroom teaching technique, our participants continued to highly value such activities as "listening to lectures" (84% rated it of highest value or "very important") and "listening to tapes, videotapes, and films" (82% rated this "very important"). In contrast, only 24% considered "discussion and

work in small groups" to be "very important". Chart 3 summarizes participants' ratings of "very important" assigned to ten program activities. Chart 4 summarizes all ratings assigned by participants to the program activities.

[Charts 3 and 4 about here]

Such findings underline the importance of Furey's (1980) suggestion that "along with linguistic, psychological, and pedagogical factors, we must also consider cultural differences as we select, implement, and evaluate our teaching methods and classroom practices." Furey goes on to outline a "framework specifying those factors that provide a basis for cross-cultural comparison of 'classroom practices' which will allow the teacher as planner to anticipate possible sources of misunderstanding or difficulty in working across cultures in the classroom." Such a study specifying China-American differences would be revealing. Further, the comment by Patric and Daum (1980) that foreign EFL advisers in developing nations "should contribute to evolution, not revolution" in EFL methodology takes on new meaning in light of our participants' evaluation of our twenty-week program. Without having attempted to use them in traditional educational settings, one might be tempted to conclude that non-traditional approaches could not be effectively introduced in a setting such as China.

As we noted above, however, one non-traditional <u>teaching approach</u>, Community Language Learning, impressed participants enough that close to half would have "preferred more work" in it. Thus, while such a non-traditional <u>classroom activity</u> as "small-group discussions" was considered "very important" by less than one-fourth of the participants, CLL as a <u>teaching approach</u>, which often includes these same classroom activities, was seen as worthy of more study by close to half of the participants. It would appear that our participants were more willing to value non-traditional

teaching activities when they were presented within the framework of a coherent approach to teaching as represented by CLL. Parenthetically, CLL also appears to have sparked considerable interest and some independent attempts at implementation in those places in China in which it has been introduced. (Irene Dutra, personal communication).

Clearly one can derive few firm conclusions about EFL teacher training in China on the basis of a single twenty-week teacher training program. Yet a few tentative suggestions appear justified. It appears that given the right combination of factors, including the particular approach and the person(s) planning and implementing it, a non-traditional system of second language teaching may be appropriate for introduction in such a program. Yet traditional views of appropriate teaching activities remained strong among our participants and at the conclusion of our program large percentages of them remained convinced of the effectiveness of such traditional activities as "listening to lectures" and "listening to tapes." Further, the fact that EFL teachers in China have had virtually no formal training in EFL teaching techniques does not appear to have precluded their receptiveness to such training. Indeed, as noted above, the majority of our teachers selected "language teaching techniques" as an area in which they would have preferred more instruction. Finally, further cross-cultural research in such areas as cultural values, modes of learning, and student-teacher role relationships along the lines suggested by Furey (1980) can be expected to yield information which should prove useful in future EFL teacher training programs in international settings.

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CHART 1

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Weeks \ Instruction	SW	CLL	Eclectic 1	Eclectic 2
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6 - 10	1	2	3	4
11 - 15	4	3	2	1
16 - 20	2	1	4	3

Each block represents approximately 45 hours of instruction for the small groups designated by numbers 1 - 4. Small groups varied in size from 10 participants (Group 1) to 15 participants (Group 4).

CHART 2
PARTICIPANTS' PREFERENCES FOR ADDITIONAL WORK IN SIX PROGRAM CATEGORIES

(QUESTION NUMBER 12)

N=45

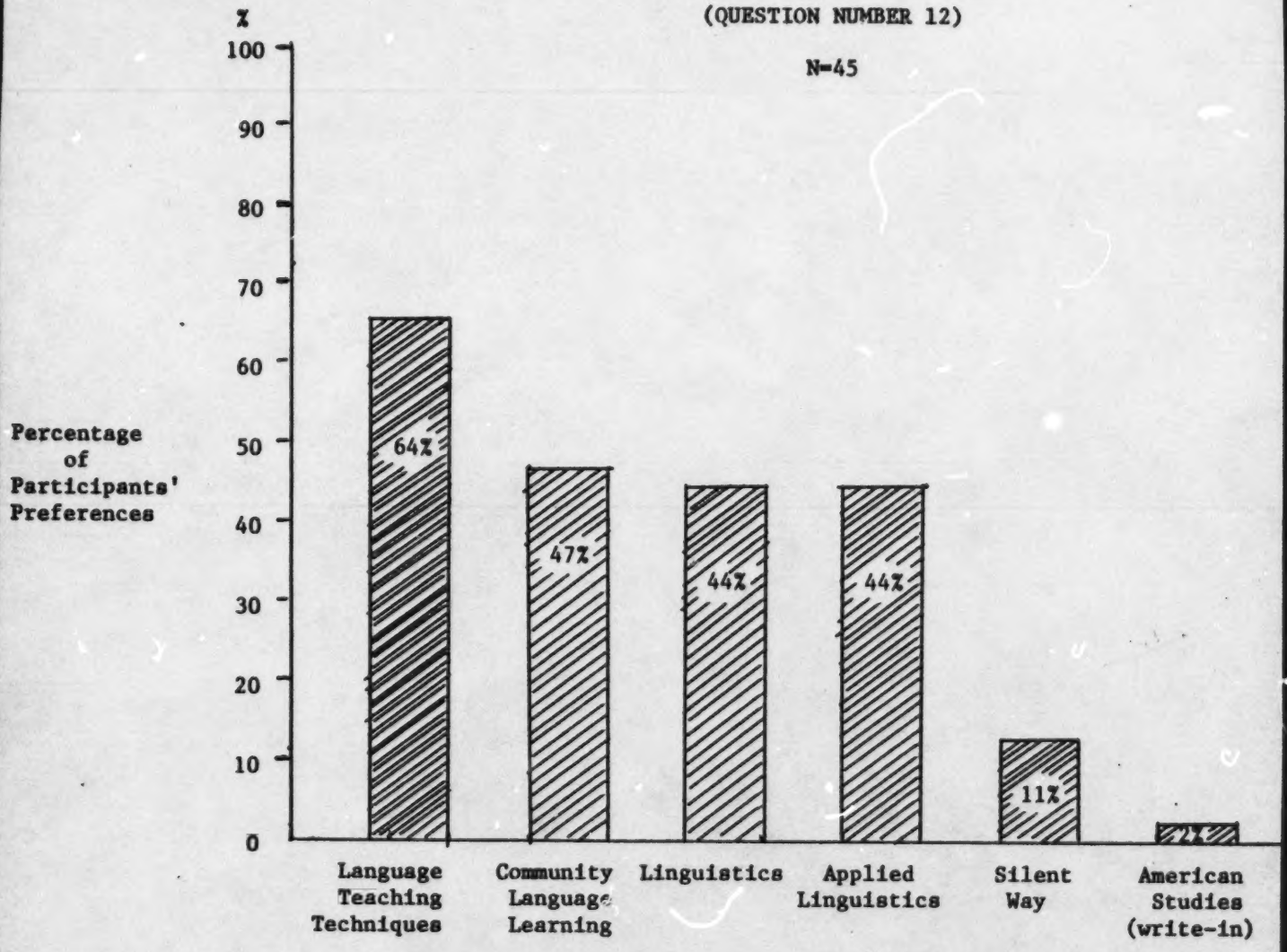

CHART 3

PARTICIPANT RATINGS OF "VERY IMPORTANT"
ASSIGNED TO TEN PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

(QUESTION NUMBER 10)

N=45

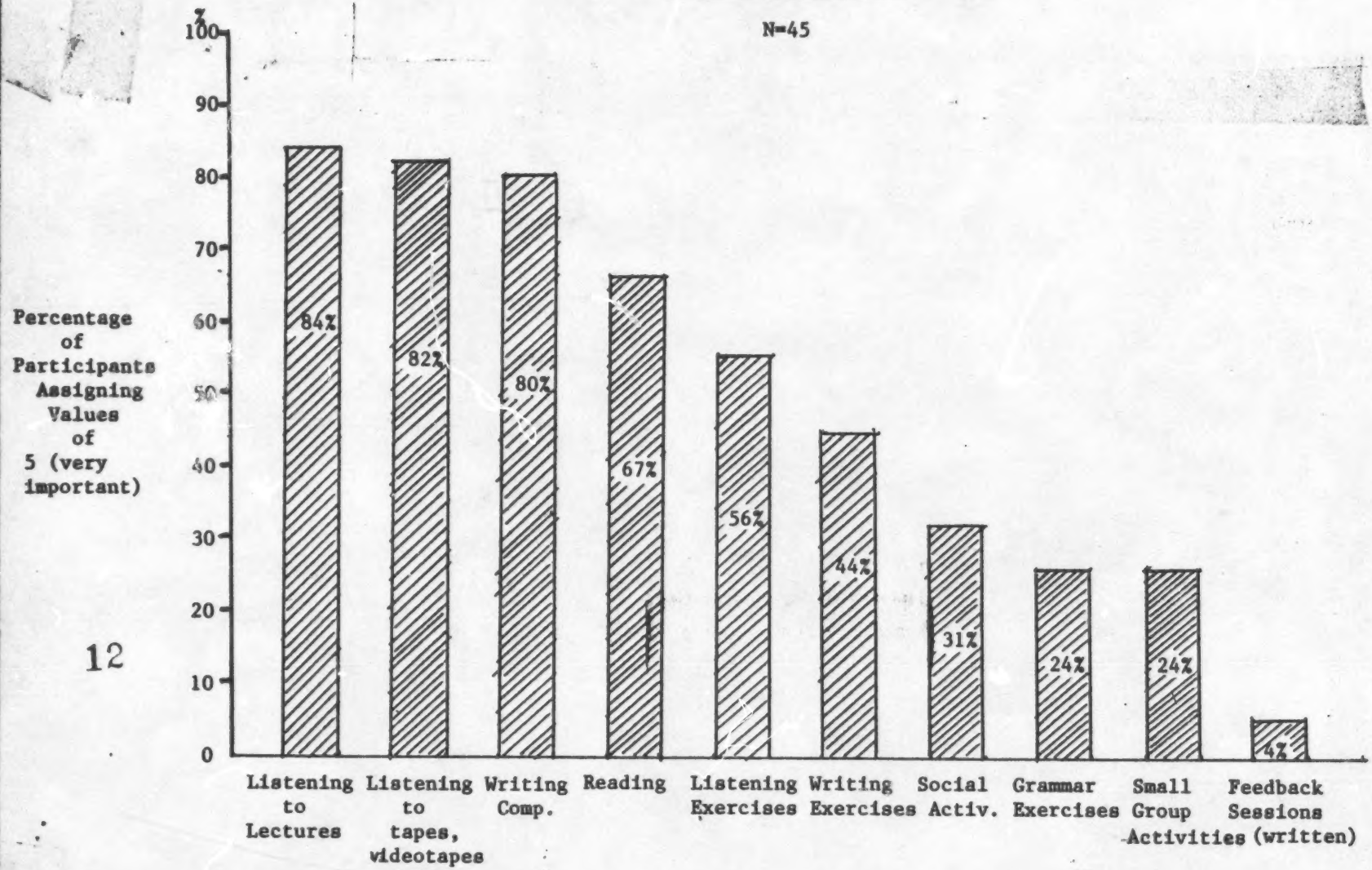

CHART 4

PARTICIPANT RATINGS FOR EACH PROGRAM ACTIVITY
(QUESTION NUMBER 10)

N=45

ACTIVITY \ RATINGS	Very Important (5)	Quite Important (4)	Important (3)	Not So Important (2)	Un Important (1)
	%	%	%	%	%
a. discussion and work in small groups . . .	24	36	27	11	2
b. feedback sessions (written)	4	33	40	20	2
c. listening to tapes, videotapes, and films	82	11	7	--	--
d. listening to lectures	84	13	--	2	--
e. reading	67	22	11	--	--
f. listening exercises	56	31	13	--	--
g. grammar exercises	24	33	20	11	11
h. writing exercises	44	22	24	7	--
i. writing compositions	80	13	4	2	--
j. social activities	31	31	29	4	2

k. other (please list)
American Studies: 4

Conversation/Discussion with teachers: 6

Feedback on students from teachers: 2

APPENDIX

Fulbright Program, Peking University

FINAL EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE, JULY 1980

1. The four most useful language teaching techniques and activities I have learned in this program and may use in my teaching are:
   a. _____
   b. _____
   c. _____
   d. _____

2. As a result of being placed in my group for the morning classes, I felt: (Check one line.)
   very pleased _____ displeased _____
   pleased _____ very displeased _____
   neutral _____

   I would have preferred _____.

3. When I return to my home institution, I will probably teach a new course as a result of this program: YES _____ NO _____.
   (If YES, list the course(s) you may teach.)
   a. _____
   b. _____
   c. _____

4. The fact that language proficiency was used as the basis for placement into Groups 1,2,3, or 4 was: FAIR _____ UNFAIR _____.
   If UNFAIR, I would have preferred that grouping be based on

   _____.

5. Being in my group for the morning classes made me feel:

   POSITIVE _____ NEUTRAL _____ NEGATIVE _____.

6. I believe that Beida support of the program (dormitories, food, reading room, library, trips, classrooms, duplication of tapes, other types of support) was:

   EXCELLENT _____ GOOD _____ FAIR _____ POOR _____

7. I believe that being in my group (labelled 1,2,3, or 4) affected my performance in the program. YES _____ NO _____(If YES, please explain):

   _____

   _____

8. In the order of preference (#1 = best), the five books I have found <u>most useful</u> in this program or for future use are:
   1. _____
   2. _____
   3. _____
   4. _____
   5. _____

9. I was pleased with the rotation of morning classes every five weeks.
YES _____ NO _____ (If NO, what kind of schedule would you have preferred? .....

_____

_____

10. Please give a value to each of the following activities according to the following scale. If you consider the activity:

very important give it a 5
quite important " " " 4
important " " " 3
not so important " " " 2
unimportant " " " 1

a. discussion and work in small groups _____
b. feedback sessions _____
c. listening to tapes, videotapes, and films _____
d. listening to lectures _____
e. reading
f. listening exercises _____
g. grammar exercises _____
h. writing exercises _____
i. writing compositions _____
j. social activities _____
k. other (please list)
_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____

11. My main reason for studying English in this program is/was

_____

12. This program has included work in Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, Language Teaching Techniques, Community Language Learning, and The Silent Way.

I liked having this broad scope. YES _____ NO _____

I would have preferred having more: (Check one or more lines.)

Linguistics _____
Applied Linguistics _____
Language Teaching Techniques _____
Community Language Learning _____
The Silent Way _____

13. Please write on a separate sheet in what ways this 20-week program has affected <u>you as a teacher</u>. Include and identify the single most important thing you got out of the program.

Group Number _____ No name please